

cataloged as *B. okellyi* in all the main collections, including those of the United States National Museum and the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard.

In Europe *B. okellyi* was in use for 45 years until Disney (1982) introduced the name *Borophaga subsultans* in the PHORIDAE, despite the long and extensive interpretation of *subsultans* as being a name in the SPHAEROCERIDAE (for over a century in *Borborus* and, after Richards (1930), in *Sphaerocera*). He did this only on the basis of the Linnean Society specimen, which may or may not be original. Disney argues that the major recent literature in Europe (his own publications) uses *B. subsultans* and that further change should be avoided. We must weigh a European change versus a North American change. Since *okellyi* has been in the European phorid literature for 32 years longer than *subsultans* I prefer *Borophaga okellyi* as the valid name of this species. There remains, too, the fact that most literature references to *subsultans* are in the sphaerocerid sense.

Additional references

- Borgmeier, T. 1963. Revision of the North American phorid flies. Part I. The Phorinae, the Aenigmatiinae and Metopiniinae, except *Megaselia*. *Studia Entomologica*, 6: 1–256.
- Schnitz, H. & Beyer, E. 1965. Family Phoridae. In Stone, A., Sabrosky, C.W., Wirth, W.W., Foote, R.H. & Coulson, J.R. (Eds.), *A catalog of the Diptera of America North of Mexico*. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

Comment on the proposed conservation of *Hydromantes* Gistel, 1848 (Amphibia, Caudata) by the designation of *Salamandra genei* Temminck & Schlegel, 1838 as the type species

(Case 2868; see BZN 50: 219–223; 51: 149–153)

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1. A rapid reading of the comments published in BZN 51: 149–153 may give an impression of simple universal agreement among their authors for the proposal by Smith & Wake (BZN 50: 219–223). Careful reading shows that this impression would be wrong. In fact the comments can be classed in two groups. Some express the view that the name *Hydromantes* should be maintained in the sense understood by Dunn (1923), i.e. for the European species *Hydromantes italicus* Dunn, 1923, *Salamandra genei* Temminck & Schlegel, 1838, and species considered to be congeneric with them. This view does not infringe taxonomic freedom: it leaves individual biologists free to decide whether related American species should be placed in the same genus or whether they should be in a distinct genus, of which the valid name is *Hydromantoides* Lanza & Vanni, 1981 (type species *Speleperpes platycephalus* Camp, 1916).

2. The second attitude is very different. It is based on the view that the American species should *not* be placed in a separate genus, and that the name *Hydromantes* should be retained for both them and the European species for which the valid name *Speleomantes* Dubois, 1984 exists. According to this view neither *Hydromantoides* nor *Speleomantes* are acceptable names. We are here far from the basic principle that the Code should never restrict 'the freedom of taxonomic thought or action'

(Preamble, pp. 2, 3). I am not convinced that the remark by Hillis (BZN 51: 152) that the action proposed by Smith & Wake does not 'impinge upon the debate over the content of *Hydromantes*' is right: it is not borne out by some of the other comments. In the name of 'stability of nomenclature', will taxonomic revisions in the future be prevented because of the 'pointless task' (Jennings, BZN 51: 149) of changing names in collections and popular books? There are numerous zoological groups which were for long believed to be a single taxon but which are now known to consist of many, and the number of labels which have had to be changed is vastly greater than in the case of the poorly studied group of newts here under discussion. The attitude exemplified by the comment of Jennings gives support to those who think that taxonomy is old-fashioned, that everything is known about biodiversity, and that therefore no funds are necessary for this part of biology.

3. One point deserves a special comment, since it is of wider relevance than this particular case. The members of the Commission cannot have detailed knowledge of the taxonomy and nomenclature of all groups, and in resolving the many cases submitted to them have the duty of looking at the proper use of the general principles of nomenclature. Unavoidably, they have to rely for factual details on the information provided by specialists in the applications and comments published in the *Bulletin*. It is vital, therefore, that authors should take great care to avoid giving a misleading impression. It is an important part of the argument by Smith & Wake (see BZN 50: 221, para. 7) and some of their supporters (Jennings, BZN 51: 149; Cook, 51: 152; Stebbins, 51: 153) that 'subsequent authors have not adopted Dubois's (1984) nomenclature'. Unfortunately this statement is simply not true, as can be easily seen by inspection of the *Zoological Record*. The truth is that there has been a progressive adoption of this taxonomy and nomenclature by specialists of this group of amphibians, as shown by the following data. I have given the Commission Secretariat a list of references which documents that, in the period 1985–1987, there were 9 uses of the name *Hydromantes* for the European species against 1 of *Speleomantes*; in 1988–1990, 10 of *Hydromantes* against 4 of *Speleomantes*; in 1991–1993, 5 of *Hydromantes* against 8 of *Speleomantes*. The papers using *Speleomantes* had a total of 23 authors. These data are not exhaustive (especially after June 1993, the last month covered by the published issues of the *Zoological Record* for amphibians), but they show a clear trend. They refute the misleading statement by Smith & Wake, and on the contrary show that we are now in the transition period which occurs in every similar case of nomenclatural change (be this due to nomenclatural or to taxonomic causes). Examination of the papers mentioned above shows that the authors who have adopted the nomenclatural change are mostly zoologists involved in faunistic and taxonomic works, while those who did not make the change were working on physiological, anatomical and other biological aspects where taxonomy and nomenclature are of less immediate interest. It is noteworthy that among the works where the new (and correct) nomenclature was adopted there are four important books on European herpetology (Castanet & Guyétant, 1989; Delaugerre & Cheylan, 1992; Nöllert & Nöllert, 1992; Stumpel-Rienks, 1992); the last of these is published under the auspices of the Societas Europea Herpetologica and is part of a series of major reference books (*Handbuch der Amphibien und Reptilien Europas*, edited by Wolfgang Böhme).

4. *Hydromantes* Gistel, 1848 is a replacement name for *Geotriton* Bonaparte, 1832, and consequently both the genera have as type the nominal species *Salamandra exigua* Laurenti, 1768; however, as documented by Dubois (1984), this type fixation was based on misidentification by Bonaparte of the taxonomic species later called *Hydromantes italicus* Dunn, 1923. This species, which is the type species of *Speleomantes*, belongs to the PLETHODONTIDAE, in which family *Hydromantes* has always been used, whereas *Salamandra exigua* belongs to the SALAMANDRIDAE.

5. Whatever the eventual ruling on this case, the Opinion should specify the status of the name *Geotriton*, which was used for 91 years in many publications, before *Hydromantes* was resurrected by Dunn (1923) on mistaken grounds. As I have pointed out before (Dubois, 1984), there is no need for Commission action in the present case; the names *Hydromantoides* Lanza & Vanni, 1981 and *Speleomantes* Dubois, 1984 exist and have been in recent valid usage. Those who wish to place the American and European species in one genus can use the former name. Rather than change the type species of *Hydromantes*, it would be much more logical for the Commission (if action by it were necessary) to conserve the name *Geotriton*, which was clearly created by Bonaparte (1832) for the animals in question, was used by all authors for nearly a century, and of which the name *Hydromantes* is nothing but a replacement name, i.e. a junior objective synonym. Moreover, in Italy, the only European country rich in populations of these rare newts, this genus is still known under the vernacular name 'geotritone'. *Geotriton* reflects much more accurately the terrestrial and cavernicolous characteristics of this group than does the totally inappropriate name *Hydromantes*.

6. I must confess that, in all that has been written about this case, I have had some sympathy for a single argument in favour of the conservation of the name *Hydromantes*; it is the fact that this name is used to denote these animals in some lists of threatened and protected species. But the Commission should carefully consider the general consequences of accepting this argument. It could lead to the 'protection' of names which are threatened not for nomenclatural reasons but because of a taxonomic reassessment of the groups involved. Should zoologists accept a limitation of their taxonomic freedom in order not to disturb the stability of 'official' lists of animals in computer databases, conservation texts, and so on? This is contrary to a basic principle of the Code. Even in the present case the argument is being used to reject the recognition of a separate genus (*Hydromantoides*) for the American species, though there are biological reasons for separating them from the European group (i.e. *Speleomantes*, or *Hydromantes* if Smith & Wake's proposed type designation is accepted). Behind the rather insignificant case of this relatively little studied group there are at stake general 'philosophical' questions of zoological nomenclature which the Commission should consider before voting on the application.

7. In the past 15 years I have surveyed most of the existing literature on the nomenclature of amphibians, from 1758 and even before; I doubt if anyone else living has studied as many old books and papers with the aim of stabilizing the nomenclature of this group of animals. I have found a rather low number of cases where the current nomenclature was clearly wrong. In some of these cases I resolved the problems 'by myself', that is through the normal provisions of the Code. When I discovered the *Hydromantes* problem in 1984 I did consider referring it to the Commission, but I realized that it would probably suffer the same destiny as some

others that I had already submitted and that the problem would be likely to remain unsolved for years. I therefore decided (Dubois, 1984) simply to follow the Code in this case. Experience shows that this may be the quickest and most efficient course; nevertheless I am grateful to Smith & Wake for raising this case now.

Additional references

- Castanet, J. & Guyétant, R. (Eds.). 1989. *Atlas de répartition des amphibiens et reptiles de France*. 191 pp. Société Herpétologique de France, Paris.
 Delaugerre, M. & Cheylan, M. 1992. *Atlas de répartition des batraciens et reptiles de Corse*. 128 pp. Parc Naturel Régional de Corse et École Pratique des Hautes Etudes.

Comments on the proposed conservation of *Lycognathophis* Boulenger, 1893 (Reptilia, Serpentes)

(Case 2877; see BZN 51: 330–331)

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I am in full support of the proposal to conserve the name *Lycognathophis* Boulenger, 1893 by suppressing *Scopelophis* Fitzinger, 1843. The latter name has not been used even since Dowling (1990) pointed out its priority. Although Dowling implied that *Lycognathophis* had been little used, it has actually been employed for over a century for *L. seychellensis* (Schlegel, 1837), the only endemic snake in the Seychelles. The resurrection of *Scopelophis* would be seriously confusing both to snake systematists and to biogeographers of the Seychelles.

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Conservation of *Lycognathophis* Boulenger, 1893 is fully justified; the alternative name *Scopelophis* Fitzinger, 1843 was published without any diagnosis and has not been used at all. In reviving *Scopelophis*, Dowling described the name *Lycognathophis* as being misleading, since it implies that this natricine snake is a lycodontine, but this has no bearing: many generic names are misleading to some extent.

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I urge the Commission to accept this application. To my knowledge the species involved has not been associated with any generic name other than *Lycognathophis*. Fitzinger's name clearly has priority but the issue is stability of nomenclature; under Article 79c of the Code an exception to priority is warranted.

(4) Support for the application has also been received from Professor Edwin L. Bell (*Albright College, Reading, Pennsylvania 19612-5234, U.S.A.*) and Drs A. Dale